

# ARIZONA *Our history* LATINA *Our story* TRAILBLAZERS

Stories of Courage, Hope & Determination

Trailblazer Series Vol VI





## *Marie López Rogers*

### Caring for Her Community Like Family



As the first Latina mayor of Avondale, Ariz., Marie López Rogers feels that her city is her family. “From a Latina perspective, being the matriarch, that’s how I treat my community -- there just happens to be 78,000 people in my family,” she said.

Growing up, Marie’s world revolved around her home in the close-knit neighborhood of Litchfield’s Camp 50 and the cotton fields, where she assisted her parents in the harvest. In the early 1950s Marie attended Litchfield Elementary School. Although the school didn’t segregate Hispanic and Anglo students, she remembers struggling with language barriers as a non-English speaking student.

In the mid-1950s, the López family moved into Avondale. Marie completed eighth grade at Avondale Elementary School and entered Agua Fria High School, graduating in 1966. She worked at Mountain

Bell and took night classes in business through Glendale Community College.

She also began dating her future husband, Eddie Rogers, a young African-American from a farm worker family in South Avondale. In spite of the hardships posed by a society which, at that time, found mixed race relationships largely unacceptable, the two married in 1969 in California. Their family grew to include three sons: Tim, Steve and Chris.

While her boys were in school, Marie began working in the religious education program at the local Catholic church. She started a social work position in the diocese’s Catholic Charities, igniting her passion for public service.

Through her work, Marie became known in the community. When an Avondale City Council seat opened in the mid-1990s, then-Mayor Tom Morales



suggested she run for office. Marie attended the Leadership West Academy and joined the City's Planning and Zoning board as first steps to broaden her knowledge.

In 1996 Marie joined the Avondale City Council. She had served for nearly 10 years when the mayor left his seat to run for Congress and she was appointed to complete his term. In 2007, she officially ran for the mayoral seat and was elected as the 19th mayor in Avondale, becoming the first Latina to hold this position. She ran again and won in 2012.

Marie places education and encouraging children high on her priority list, leading Avondale to become the first official Kids at Hope City by creating an environment where all children experience success. The Children's Action Alliance recognized Marie's focus on young people with the 2010 Jacques Steiner Public Leadership Award for Children.

Marie's skills in consensus building and her passion for developing communities led to leadership roles at regional, state and national levels. In 2009, she received Valle Del Sol's Profiles of Success Special Recognition for her advocacy, leadership and years of service to her community, emphasizing the integration of the Hispanic

community in all West Valley communities.

At the state level, former governor of Arizona, Janet Napolitano, asked Mayor Rogers to serve on several committees, including the Governor's Military Affairs Commission and the Governor's Statewide Youth Development Task Force. Marie was also appointed to serve on the Attorney General's Latino Community Justice Council.

In 2012, Marie became the first Latina to serve as president of the National League of Cities (NLC), which is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. Her role on the national stage involves advocating on Capitol Hill on behalf of more than 19,000 cities and towns across the country.

This national platform led to meeting President Barack Obama and the First Lady on numerous occasions. In 2011, after sharing her personal story with the president at one of these meetings, she watched on television as he related her story back at a National Council of La Raza conference. President Obama said of Marie: "Interestingly, she now works at the very site where she used to pick cotton, except now City Hall sits there and Marie is the town's mayor."



The Raul H. Castro Institute (RCI) is proud to have a role in preserving the significant contributions made by the 2014 Arizona Latina Trailblazers. This vision of the the Raul H. Castro Institute is to improve the quality of life for the Latino community in Arizona by bringing focus to priority issues of education, health and human services, leadership, and civic engagement – all areas in which these Latina Trailblazers have created a tremendous and lasting impact. Through the use of this book in educational settings and through its availability as part of the Arizona Memory Project, their legacy will be perpetuated as generations of leaders continue to be inspired by the spirit and actions of these pioneering women. It has been a privilege to tell their stories.

**To learn more about the lives and achievements of the 2014 Arizona Latina Trailblazers, please visit**

**[www.azlatinatrailblazers.com](http://www.azlatinatrailblazers.com)**

All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form. The publishers grant permission to individual teachers to reproduce the contents of this book for educational purposes and classroom use. Limit of Liability/ Disclaimer of Warranty: While the author and the publishers have used their best efforts in preparing this publication, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of its contents and specifically disclaim any intent to defame or slight any people, places or organizations.

Published by Raul H. Castro Institute of Phoenix College

Printed in the United States of America

Copyright © 2014

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

---

Oral histories written by Jean Reynolds, Historian

Video production by SRP

Design by Alfredo Hernandez, Phoenix College

Editing by Eileen Archibald, Michelle Klinger, Megan Martin, Phoenix College

The Raul H. Castro Institute is proud to have partnered with Latino Perspectives Magazine for several years. We have collaborated in capturing the memories and telling the stories of the Latina Trailblazers for the Series Vol 1 through Vol V. Our heartfelt thanks for the dedication and passion that they brought to this important project.

**Thank you to the premier sponsor for making this project possible:**





Interviews with:

Catherine Anaya - Martha Basco - Josephine "Josie" O. Campo-Luera - Charlie García - Frank Barrios - Marie López Rogers - Gina Montes - Dr. Anna Solley and Dr. Christine Martin

## *Latinas' Stories Remain Important in Arizona's History*

As educators, social workers, labor leaders, entrepreneurs, scholars, judicial representatives, homemakers, nurses, ranch wives, or political representatives, Latinas and Hispanas have long been at the forefront of Arizona's history. It is important that we recognize the impact of their individual contributions, and imperative that their collective stories be recalled and shared.

The life journeys of these women are filled with compelling stories that reflect the strength of their vision, their courageous actions, and their thoughtful advocacy. Their outstanding leadership formed strong cultural cornerstones, laying the foundation for women in leadership roles today.

And so we honor them and all that they represent, pioneers who forged our rich cultural heritage and strong role models.



Presented by



RAUL H. CASTRO  
INSTITUTE OF  
PHOENIX  
COLLEGE

Premier Sponsor



Delivering more than power.™